DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 363 438 PS 021 900

TITLE	Sticking Together II: Strengthening Linkages and the Transition between Early Childhood Education and Early Elementary School. Summary of the National Policy Forum (2nd, Washington, D.C., November 5-6, 1992).
INSTITUTION	Administration for Children, Youth, and Families (DHHS), Washington, D.C.; Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.; Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC. Programs for the Improvement of Practice.; Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-16-042937-4; PIP-93-1112
PUB DATE	Oct 93
NOTE	48p.; For First National Policy Forum, see ED 351 152. Additional support for the Forum was provided by the National Head Start Association and Gryphon House Early Childhood Book Collection.
AVAILABLE FROM	U.S. Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, Mail Stop: SSOP, Washington, DC 20402-9328.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Educational Policy; *Family School Relationship; Parent Participation; *Preschool Education; Primary Education; School Readiness; *Student Adjustment; *Transitional Programs
IDENTIFIERS	America 2000; *Linkage; National Education Goals 1990; *Project Head Start; Regional Educational Laboratories

ABSTRACT

This document summarizes presentations made at a national policy forum concerning children's transition from home and preschool to the first years of elementary school. Opening remarks from representatives of the sponsoring agencies reviewed Goal One of the National Education Goals, which states that by the year 2000 all children in the United States will start school ready to learn, and described their agencies' work in the area of school transition. A plenary session included a presentation of various linkage and transition issues which were later addressed individually in small group discussions and regional laboratory activities. Two presenters then addressed the issue of parental and family involvement in the transition to school, while three individuals discussed the State Head Start Collaboration Program in Texas, Pennsylvania, and Oregon. Six roundtable sessions examined various issues involved in the home to school transition process. Concluding remarks addressed the challenges and opportunities facing early childhood education. A list of the forum's participants, along with their affiliations, addresses, and telephone numbers, is also included. (MDM)

STICKING TOGETHER II

Strengthening Linkages and the Transition Between Early Childhood Education and Early Elementary School

Summary of the Second National Policy Forum

Sponsored by

Administration on Children, Youth and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Office of Educational Research and Improvement

and

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

The Regional Educational Laboratories

For sale by the U.S. Government Printing Office
Superintendent of Documents, Mail Stop: SSOP, Washington, DC 20402-9328
ISBN 0-16-042937-4

U. S. Department of Education
Richard H. Riley
Secretary

Office of Educational Research and Improvement
Sharon Robinson
Assistant Secretary

Programs for the Improvement of Practice
Eve M. Bither
Director

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
Thomas W. Payzant
Assistant Secretary

U. S. Department of Health and Human Services
Donna Shalala
Secretary

Administration for Children and Families
Laurence Love
Acting Assistant Secretary

Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Joseph Mottola
Acting Commissioner

Forum Co-Directors
Allen Smith (HHS)
Charles Stalford (ED)

Support for the Forum was also provided by the
National Head Start Association
and
Gryphon House Early Childhood Book Collection

Presenters' titles were accurate at the time of the Forum in 1992.

October 1993

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Focus and Summary of the Forum

National Education Goal #1: By the year 2000, all children in America will start school ready to learn.

With this goal as the basis for discussion, the second National Policy Forum on Early Childhood Education was held November 5-6, 1992, in Washington, D.C. Its focus was an expanded exploration of the issue of linkages and transition between early childhood education programs and elementary schools. Successful transition is essential if this first national education goal is to be achieved.

The forum was collaboratively sponsored by the Head Start program in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' (HHS) Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF); and the U.S. Department of Education through its Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI) and Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE). A wide variety of participants included federal, state, and local organizational, agency, and school representatives, as well as parents.

Objectives To Achieve the Goal

Three objectives noted in the National Education Goals Report (National Education Goals Panel, Washington, DC, 1992) were central to the speakers' presentations and to the discussions that followed:

- All disadvantaged and disabled children will have access to high quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs that help prepare them for school.
- Every parent in America will be a child's first teacher and devote time each day to helping his or her preschool child learn; parents will have access to the training and support they need.
- Children will receive the nutrition and health care needed to arrive at school with healthy minds and bodies; and the number of low birthweight babies will be significantly reduced through enhanced prenatal health systems.

Barriers to Transition

Children face numerous challenges as they move from preschool programs to elementary school. This transition involves a variety of factors:

- Adjusting to an elementary school environment that is likely to place more emphasis on formal educational experiences (such as acquiring reading and mathematics skills) than on their prior developmental experiences;
- Being misplaced or even retained in an elementary grade or program if the school does not build on the child's successes and level of competence but instead focuses on the child's failures, lack of readiness, and the remediation of deficits;
- Moving with their families from early intervention programs that integrated various child and family services to a school program that only provides educational services; and
- Attending an educational program in which parental involvement is circumscribed, after having parents highly involved during the preschool years.

The nation is increasingly realizing the importance of children's readiness for school and schools' readiness for children. This readiness is essential for all children, and especially those at risk. It is a challenge faced by the great diversity of programs, agencies, and organizations whose responsibility is the education and care of young children and their families.

Summary of Presentations and Discussions

Opening Remarks and Forum Goals

Peter Mangione (Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development) noted the diversity of participants and the collaboration of the two federal agencies as he encouraged participants to recognize the changes they could effect through collaborative effort at state and local levels. Representatives of the sponsors introduced the agenda for the forum. Doug Klafehn (ACYF) reviewed parts of the Head Start experience in working for effective transition. Eve M. Bither (OERI) addressed the need for collaboration required for effective transition. Mary Jean LeTendre (OESE) noted numerous efforts at the federal level and emphasized the need for continuity beyond transition from preschool to elementary school.

Overview of Linkage and Transition Issues

Martin Gerry (HHS) stressed the interrelated issues that were later examined and developed in discussions and other presentations. He emphasized the policy goals to enhance a nurturing family environment and to provide the critical mass of services and supports for that environment. He then presented a strategy for systems change to achieve these goals and objectives.

Group Discussions and Regional Laboratory Activities

Continuing the development of issues outlined by Martin Gerry, small groups discussed issues and ideas concerning systems and program design, financing of programs, eligibility, interdisciplinary training, and accountability. The regional laboratories, which are supported by OERI, presented summaries of their leadership and involvement in regional and state projects and issues dealing with transition.

Parental and Family Involvement

Elizabeth Graue (University of Wisconsin) stressed the need for cultural sensitivity when schools provide a means for family involvement in their children's transition process. Patricia Phipps (University of Houston) focused on the issue of readiness both for parents and for the school. She made several suggestions for schools in preparing parents for their children's transition to elementary school.

State Head Start Collaboration Program

Gwen Chance (Texas), Sandy Joseph (Pennsylvania), and Anita McClanahan (Oregon) discussed efforts being carried out in their states for promoting collaborations among Head Start grantees, regional offices, state agencies, and other childhood staff.

Rouondtable Discussions

Roundtable discussions were led by project directors and others involved in specific state and local projects dealing with transition issues.

Challenges and Opportunities

Linda Likens (National Head Start Association) stressed the need for collaboration in both formal agreements and strong interpersonal relations for effective transitions. Ronald Areglado (National Association of Elementary School Principals) argued for the use of common sense in our common interest for the benefit of children. He emphasized the need for new, moral leadership to address a systemic problem and urged participants to take risks, to take action to provide the transitions young children require.

Ending the forum with a final challenge for participants to address, Peter Mangione presented a video, *Essential Connections: Ten Keys to Culturally Sensitive Child Care*. This training video is part of a series on caring for infants and toddlers that is being developed collaboratively by Far West Laboratory and the California Department of Education. The forum concluded with a challenge for action and an expanded awareness of the complexity of issues involved in addressing a child's transition from preschool to elementary school.

Opening Remarks and Forum Goals

Opening the forum and presenting its agenda, representatives of the sponsoring agencies reviewed National Education Goal #1 and described their agencies' work in the area of transition.

Peter Mangione

Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development

This forum is being held as part of the growing national effort to provide continuity to the care and education of young children. Participating in this nationwide trend, the regional laboratories are holding 10 regional conferences across the country. In addition, at the federal level, agencies are collaborating with each other in recognition of this vital need for continuity in the care and education of young children.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Administration on Children, Youth and Families, and the U.S. Department of Education, through its Office of Educational Research and Improvement and Office of Elementary and Secondary Education are sponsoring this forum in collaboration for this national effort. Three noted representatives of these agencies will summarize the needs for stronger linkages between preschool and elementary education in the context of the goals of this forum.

Doug Klafehn

Associate Commissioner
Administration on Children, Youth and Families/ Head Start
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Head Start has continued to grow over its 25-year history. It has grown from $1.3 billion to $8 billion in funding and serves 100,000 more children this year than last. Growth is expected to continue because its services are widely acknowledged and extensively needed.

The problems of establishing linkages between preschool programs and elementary schools increasingly require collaboration among agencies at local, state, and federal levels. Head Start cannot meet the challenge alone. Because funding has been provided directly from the federal to the local level, states have not been involved. Now, however, collaborations with state programs are developing for better coordination.

The collaborative efforts are working to improve the transition from Head Start to early elementary grades. Better communication between Head Start and the schools is needed and is emerging. To foster this effort, HHS has funded 32 demonstration programs. Rigorous evaluation is underway to determine the most effective techniques for this transition. These grants are part of a larger interagency agreement to reach more people and support more activities, including this forum.

Eve M. Bither

Director, Programs for the Improvement of Practice
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
U.S. Department of Education

Reasons to Address Transition

Important reasons exist to consider children's transition from Head Start and other early childhood education programs to elementary school. The first of the National Education Goals addresses this transition in the need for readiness. That goal is for all children to enter school ready to learn by the year 2000. Readiness encompasses every aspect of children's development and health from birth to entering school. But what single set of factors can be more important than the conditions under which children make the transition from preschool to kindergarten and the start of their formal schooling?

Some might say that children should have no trouble making a smooth transition from preschool

to school. Most of you probably know better. Questions exist related to philosophy, curriculum, and other matters. Misunderstanding and other reasonable causes may be responsible for communication and coordination problems in some localities. But do problems sometimes exist that are caused by "turf" issues that we can eliminate in order to get the job done better?

Collaborative Efforts for Success

Note the partnership of Federal agencies that, together with the regional educational laboratories, is sponsoring this forum. Representatives of these agencies have been meeting for some time in a continuing effort to coordinate their programs so they may be more effective in serving our children.

In Maine, where I served as Commissioner of Education, coordinated efforts operate among the Commissioners of Education, Human Services, Corrections, Mental Health, and Mental Retardation in an interdepartmental council. In considering issues of our common clients, the council focuses on early childhood issues as a vital part of its work, and Head Start is an important component. The Department of Education in Maine sponsored three early childhood demonstration sites. Jenifer Van Deusen of that department reports that they continue to operate as cooperative efforts of the public schools, Head Start, Child Development Services, and other child- and family-serving agencies.

Sharing and Learning at This Forum

We have much to learn from the collective experience of preschool educators and elementary school educators working together. One such opportunity is realizing the benefits of continuing developmentally appropriate curricula from preschool into elementary school. Another is learning more about how parents can help their children. Our best efforts are needed to smooth this transition if we really believe that education is a seamless system from birth through a lifetime of learning.

You will have an opportunity to discuss these issues and others during these two days. I urge you to focus on those issues that seem most important—to identify new opportunities for strengthening the transition and to find solutions where problems and barriers exist.

Mary Jean LeTendre

Director, Compensatory Education Programs
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

Transition—Definition and Status

The transition from preschool to elementary school is not only a symbolic but a critical, real union that is necessary if we are to achieve our nation's first education goal and the others as well.

In order to understand better the issue of transition, the U.S. Department of Education, in 1988, commissioned RMC Research Corporation to conduct a study on the move from various preschool experiences to kindergarten. Some 1,200 schools and 850 school districts were included in the random sample. The final report, *Transitions to Kindergarten in American Schools*, indicates that transition does not appear to be a high priority of the nation's schools. Only about 20 percent of the districts report a "wide range" of transition activities. One half say that no communication exists between prekindergarten and kindergarten teachers on curriculum coordination. Only 13 percent of the districts have written transition policies. Only 10 percent of schools report systematic communication between previous caregivers and teachers. And the presence of preschool programs in the school is not a guarantee of greater efforts or continuity.

Federal Government Initiatives

Most of the dialogue and the initiative at the national level on transition or continuity, to date, appropriately has been between the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education and has focused on the Head Start and the Chapter One programs. Head Start serves some 450,000 disadvantaged children each year. The Chapter One program serves 82,000 disadvantaged prekindergarten children, nearly 350,000 disadvantaged children in kindergarten, and over

two million disadvantaged children in the first, second, and third grades. Some 49 percent of Chapter One children are in Grades K-3. Clearly the linkages between these two programs must be made as strong as possible. In addition, Even Start is becoming an increasingly important program requiring broad collaboration for continuity beyond transition.

The two federal agencies have accomplished a great deal since 1990 to improve the transition of children from preschool programs to elementary schools. We have sought and received steady increases in funds for Even Start, a family literacy program that is part of Chapter One, as well as overall Chapter One funding. In addition to increased funding, we have also sponsored a series of national and state meetings on improving transition, issued results of the previously mentioned study on transition, and issued formal guidance to all Chapter One projects to integrate services between Head Start and Chapter One.

From Transition to Continuity

If preschools, regardless of their funding source, and public schools serving children in grades K-3 provided comprehensive, integrated services for all their children, the transition period would scarcely be noticed and would hardly be an issue. The upsetting disconnectedness children experience as they move from preschool to school settings would not occur if schooling at all levels included the following:

- Integrated services that respond to the comprehensive needs of children and their families;
- Developmentally appropriate curricular services for all children; and
- Parent involvement and family–focused policies and programs.

We need to move the concept of transition to a discussion of how to provide continuity in our early childhood programs. I would like to propose that Even Start—a family literacy program that is actually a part of Chapter One—although not perfect, is a good model with which we can begin. Serving children from birth through age eight, it approaches the child from the context of the family and includes parenting education and adult literacy.

By law, Even Start cannot duplicate existing services. It must build on Head Start, Chapter One Preschool, existing quality day care programs, employment and social service programs, immunization and early health screening, parenting and adult education. In its best incarnation, Even Start is the avatar of continuous, comprehensive services for young children and their families.

Overview of Linkage and Transition Issues

(Plenary Session)

Martin Gerry

Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Addressing "School Readiness"

The central focus of this policy forum is of crucial importance to children and families. For more than 25 years we have been learning, through Head Start and other early childhood programs, of the vital role early childhood plays in an individual's well-being. Given this history, the first National Education Goal, addressed to "school readiness," implicitly recognizes that learning cannot and does not occur in a vacuum. Moreover, it embraces two important truths:

1. Learning—whether cognitive, affective, or psycho-motor—occurs in the context of the whole child; and
2. The whole child, in turn, cannot be divorced from his or her family, culture, or community.

Establishing Clear Goals for Integrating Child and Family Services

Any serious discussion of linkages between and among early childhood services needs to focus on and be measured against clear cross-cutting goals for effectively integrating all early childhood and related family services and supports. The "school readiness" goal, which is a call for service integration, expanded collaboration, better program linkages, and improved program transition, reflects the emergence of two interrelated social policy goals and a rapidly evolving systems change strategy.

Two Social Policy Goals

These goals are predicated upon the realization that the family is the fundamental social institution of our society.

First, every child in America will have a permanent and nurturing family environment in which to grow and develop. Children need to be part of strong families that provide nurturing, parenting, socialization, and the intergerational transmission of religious, moral, and ethical values and attitudes. In this regard, a central reason for the effectiveness of Head Start and similar programs lies in their family focus. These programs do not see the child as an isolated, essentially static individual, but as a dynamic and evolving organism in the ecosystem of family and community. Unfortunately, most of our other current programs stress categorical eligibility factors, which focus on unidimensional, deficit identification and remediation. As a result, few succeed even in the short term. Such programs are stigmatizing since they are based in pathology or illness. Their failure to focus on multiple, interconnected family needs usually precludes achievement of positive, long-term outcomes.

Second, every family in America will have ready access to the critical mass of services, supports, and other resources that are needed to ensure that such an environment can and will be maintained. Our most troubled families are unable to negotiate the current fragmented services system to get help when they need it, such as help in physical access, funding, and other services.

The Strategy for Systems Change

This strategy is to develop and operate comprehensive, unitary, neighborhood-based child and family support structures. If the family environment is a key to improved child development and learning, then a pressing need exists to create a single point of access to services and a case advocate to help empower the family.

This approach both builds and builds on family strengths rather than deficits.

Such a strategy for service integration is a means to remove administrative and programmatic barriers that ultimately frustrate the accomplishment of overall service goals. It is designed to create an environment in which the response to the comprehensive needs of a family can be in a holistic manner. Further, this strategy is two-pronged. It seeks simultaneously to improve program outcomes—such as improved family functioning, learning, and disease prevention—and to increase family self-sufficiency through optimal involvement of the family in the planning and evaluation of services.

This expanded concept of service integration puts new emphasis on personal responsibility and choice; it necessarily redirects the emphasis of service integration from caretaking to enabling. An important part of this new vision is the stress on strengthening families by expanding their choice and control over the coordinated planning and delivery of government-funded services needed for selected economic and social opportunities. In this regard, each Head Start center attempts to be a comprehensive, community-based agency whose mission is to support families by building on each family's strengths. This outlook is a key to Head Start's success and the widespread political and popular support that the program receives.

In practice, major changes in the structures and operating styles of several services systems will be required if families are to access the critical mass of services that they need to attain improved social integration and economic self-sufficiency without the need for the ongoing intervention of government. Professionals from a variety of disciplines and other informed observers share a general consensus that it is rare to find a family with a single isolated problem that, if solved, will restore that family to productive self-sufficiency. Poverty, unemployment, lack of basic skills, low educational performance, drug abuse, lack of parenting skills, poor housing, and poor nutrition and health are interrelated symptoms of a larger problem, most often hopelessness, which is the greatest problem we face in relation to human services.

The key to this systems change is the creation of a neighborhood- and community-based support structure that:

- Stresses personal and family responsibility;
- Focuses on child and family strengths and prevention;
- Adopts a comprehensive approach to meeting the needs of families;
- Promotes a wide array of social and economic opportunities;
- Embraces and incorporates independent, volunteer-driven "points of light" efforts.

Such a service structure will permit the integration of service planning, coordination of service delivery and financing, service continuity, and establishment of mechanisms for ensuring both access to the overall support structure from any point of entry and overall accountability for every individual and family receiving support.

In addition to the single point of access, case advocates are essential. Their role is to inform, nurture, and protect. The need is for case advocacy, not case management. Advocacy supports the empowerment of people to make their own decisions. Case advocates need to function within a community-based, collaborative system of providers, including the child welfare agency, that jointly addresses problems and jointly takes responsibility for outcomes. To be effective, a case advocate needs access to a flexible pool of funds that fill the gaps in services. It has been said that "nothing coordinates like cash." In relation to case advocacy, the Head Start program has incorporated four crucial components of the comprehensive, unitary, neighborhood-based child and family support structure that must be forged: education, health, social services, and parental involvement.

Four Objectives for Achieving the Goal of an Integrated System

Four essential objectives emerge that work within the systems change strategy to achieve the goal of an integrated system of child and family services:

1. Reform to change the categorical and varied ways that eligibility for program funding is determined. This objective addresses a combined federal, state, and local problem. States must also be willing to reduce additional barriers that they impose to allow eligible people to participate in the programs. This objective also addresses the need to evolve decategorized financing structures that will support need-based, universal service structures.
2. The need for interdisciplinary professional and in-service training. Service integration initiatives have difficulty finding staff who can deal holistically with families, and staff fromdifferent disciplines often do not speak the same language even when they think they do.
3. Agreed-upon outcome measures and strategies to ensure child and family outcome accountability in the operation of integrated service structures.
4. An evaluation protocol for integrated services systems.

The Challenge for the Forum

The challenge for the discussions to follow in this policy forum is to address these linkage and transition issues, in particular with three points of emphasis: changing how programs are funded, not creating more programs; changing professional training to include interdisciplinary and group approaches; and developing accountability for a system that is to be created.

Small Group Discussions

In response to the challenges issued by Martin Gerry in his keynote address, forum participants discussed the issues in small groups. Following is a sampling of their topics and ideas. Although they were not adopted by the forum, they are recommendations of participants within the groups.

System and Program Design

- Services need to be integrated and comprehensive, with a continuum of care.
- Program design needs the component of collaboration with other programs, agencies, and the community, especially in linking family services and the school system and in overcoming turf issues.
- Program design needs to include a component for educating parents, school boards, politicians, and policymakers.
- A comprehensive approach to program design needs to provide a single point of access for information and for service.
- Program design needs to reflect preparing schools for kids as well as preparing kids for schools.

Financing Programs

- Legislation, policies, and regulations need to include coordination and collaboration as requirements for funding of programs, so that multiple sources of funding can cover the full range of needed services.
- Financing regulations need to expand eligibility requirements.
- A nationwide need exists for sharing information about innovative approaches that states and localities are using to combine funds.

Eligibility

- Eligibility for admission to programs should be focused on needs and should be broadened and clarified.
- State and federal guidelines are perceived as barriers both for eligibility and for financing.
- Eligibility requirements need to involve assessment of family needs beyond the sole focus on financial need.
- Preservice training is fragmented; training needs to be interdisciplinary and developmental, with new goals for professional training and licensure that emphasize collaboration.
- Interdisciplinary training needs to focus on preparing early childhood educators to inform, nurture, and protect.
- Interdisciplinary training needs to focus on a continuum of care with attention both to family and to inclusion.

Accountability

- Certification or licensure is needed for early childhood educators and service providers.
- Key steps in accountability include developing and agreeing upon appropriate definitions of desired outcomes for kids; developing appropriate measurement for those outcomes; conducting appropriate evaluations; connecting the results in positive, developmental ways with incentives, rewards, sanctions, and strategies that can strengthen subsequent learning and performance.
- Legislation is needed to change the focus of accountability.

Networking by Region

Following is a sampling of the discussions led by the laboratories in regionally oriented small group sessions, some of which repeated and reemphasized issues that arose in the earlier small group discussions. The Laboratories reporting were:

Research for Better Schools, Inc.
Appalachia Educational Laboratory, Inc.
SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education
Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
Mid-Continent Regional Educational Laboratory
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
Pacific Regional Educational Laboratory
Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development
Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands
North Central Regional Educational Laboratory

Some Projects and Programs

- Continuing development of a regional network of persons interested in transitions and early childhood issues in the Mid-Atlantic Region;
- The Governor's projects in West Virginia, supporting resource networks for a continuum of comprehensive services to parents and services for all children from birth through age 5;
- An integrated services model in Vermont that allows comingling of selected resources and safeguards the exchange of confidential information;
- Cross-agency conferencing and networking in Rhode Island and Vermont;
- Development of a statewide public–private initiative in New Hampshire focused on the national goal of "getting all kids ready to learn;"
- Statewide Council in Florida, including 28 agencies, to promote collaboration between the Department of Education and the Department of Human Resources, with a resulting joint strategic plan and a joint budget appropriation presented to the governor; and
- A network of schools in Alaska devoted to restructuring to better meet the developmental needs of young children and their families.

Selected Issues

- Ways in which Follow Through programs support transitions and sources of information;
- Need for child care providers to be involved in the transition process;
- Challenges in education for immigrant children;
- Need for stronger professional preparation; across service areas and in adult development and technology areas;
- Dissemination of model collaboration efforts;
- Educating parents; and
- Need for both preschool and kindergarten teachers to have a common background of preparation.

Parental and Family Involvement in the Transition to School

Elizabeth Graue

Assistant Professor, Early Childhood Education
University of Wisconsin, Madison

Flaws in the Push for Parental Presence in School

One of the most emphatic aspects of educational reform rhetoric is the push for more parental presence in schooling. For the most part, recommendations are focused on shaping parental activities to the needs of the schools. This work largely ignores what families bring to school. It has not examined adequately the needs of parents as they come in contact with the school, the roles they are given or choose to take in their child's education, or the resources they have to facilitate interaction with educational professionals.

Parenting, which may seem at first glance to be an individual activity, is in fact a complex social experience. Communities develop ideas of good parenting, and these ideas are communicated through various social networks. Individual parents use these shared but often ragged sets of ideas about parenting in their daily lives.

A Comparison of Two Communities

Tracing the experience of parents in two very different communities illustrates the complexities of the differences and the problems. We need to look deeper into the meaning that individuals have for schooling to be able to work for change.

The two communities are approximately the same size in population, are part of the same school district, and lie within 10 miles of one another. Nevertheless, they are quite different. Fulton Elementary serves three small rural communities with working-class populations of white and Latino families. Parents are involved in agriculture and factory work, manual labor, and service jobs. The majority of mothers work outside the home. On the other hand, Norwood is a bedroom community of professionals working in nearby cities. The families are primarily middle and upper-middle class and white. Fathers have well-paying professional careers, and mothers work in the home to supervise children's activities.

A practical example of how these communities differ in their actions is the degree to which they intervene in the normal school enrollment process. In Fulton parents assume that their children should go to school if they meet the entrance criterion of date of birth. In Norwood parents think more about readiness and maturity than about the entrance criterion. One in 5 kindergarten boys has been held out in Norwood compared with one in 20 in Fulton. This is but one significant difference in parental responses in the two communities.

In Fulton parents have a home-oriented perspective on their children. Their job as parents is to help the teacher, but they have no preset agenda. This attitude is supported by the school. Information flow is unidirectional from the school to the parents. Since no structure is available for parents to give input, they are more or less supportive outsiders.

Norwood parents blast onto the kindergarten scene with ideas about what the school should do for their child and what characteristics their child needs to fit into the system. Parents seem to feel that they not only have a duty to find out about the school but also to share the information with others. This can be called an ethic of decisionmaking in Norwood, poised to increase students' chances for success.

Herein lies an important difference. Since Fulton mothers work outside the home, they are rarely available to be in the classroom. On the other hand, many of the teachers at Norwood feel that they cannot get rid of the mothers who want to volunteer there. In many ways, the Norwood parents have equal footing with Norwood teachers in educational decisionmaking. Although the Norwood parents may seem to have more power in their interactions with the school, they actually are prisoners of the information gathering and

decision-making process that structure so many of their interactions.

The Issues That Emerge From These Differences

Why are the stories of these two communities important? They underscore the murkiness of many of the ideas taken for granted in U.S. education. First, the readiness issue--a ready child in Fulton is not a ready child in Norwood, according to parental perspectives. According to the kindergarten screener, however, the children in these schools are more or less dead even in their incoming skills. But because of the actions and beliefs in the community related to the readiness of these children, a whole group of children is labeled as unready.

The second issue is that this difference shows why we cannot develop a list of good parenting practices for the transition to school. By almost every measure the Norwood parents are exemplary in their relations with the schools. But they fulfill their responsibilities in the extreme. Too much of the wrong kind of parental involvement can cause damage to the ecological system of the school. In contrast, many people would jump to the conclusion that the Fulton parents do not care about their children's education since they are not there to help. They seem passive. Although these parents care very much for their children, they assume that they are not qualified to make educational decisions. And the school's policies reinforce this reactive role.

A Needed Change in Focus About Parental Involvement

Discussions of home–school relations are typically confined to the topic of parental involvement. Educational reformers and policymakers restrict their attention to activities that increase parental presence in school. From this perspective parental involvement is treated as a commodity to be increased for school enhancement, just another variable in the school effectiveness equation. This approach is blind to the social nature of parenting, the cultural meanings that are fundamental to interactions among community members.

What does this analysis mean if we hope to help parents be advocates for their children? First, we need to realize that no simple answers exist here. Second, we need a vision that does not assume that the school will teach families what they need to know about their children. We need a new perspective that assumes that parents have rich knowledge of their children; it is the school's job to utilize that information. We need to address the needs of parents as defined by them, not as defined by the school. We need to reframe our programs for collaboration and outreach rather than for parental education.

Patricia Phipps

Assistant Professor, College of Education
University of Houston

The Central Issue of Readiness

A central issue related to parental and family involvement is readiness, both for the parents and for the school. The ideal situation would be for children to flow from a developmentally appropriate preschool program, such as Head Start, to elementary school. Unfortunately this is not always possible. How do schools provide for those who have no preschool, who are victims of society, or whose experience or culture is different from other children with whom they will attend school?

We have a diverse and uncoordinated set of circumstances to deliver services to children. The present system for early childhood education has disconnected functions, different sources of funding, and few links with public schools. Few public schools have a system to learn about the experiences of children in preschool. Many public schools are becoming providers of preschool programs without any experience in it or knowledge of what other programs do. Further, the present mix of private, public, for-profit, nonprofit, religious, and other types of preschool has no commonality. Nevertheless, public schools will have graduates from all different types of preschool programs.

Transition Challenges Facing the Public Schools

The public schools face major challenges for young children entering them. Schools must become capable of working effectively with parents in their great diversity to meet their children's needs. Certain policies and actions are essential for schools to become true partners with parents. Schools must provide an environment that involves parents as partners in making decisions about their own children and the school program. Further, they must provide an interactive transitioning process

Suggestions for Schools

We do not need to reinvent the wheel for schools to be effective in providing these services. The task force of Right from the Start, a program of the National School Boards Association, has made several suggestions for schools:

- Provide outreach to parents;
- Provide access to parents to observe and volunteer in school programs;
- Provide time for parents and teachers to plan and conduct services;
- Provide materials for use at home;
- Provide services for prenatal through third grade; and
- Provide programs for parents to be an integral part of the school.

We also need to bring our knowledge of other areas to this transition process, for example, what we know about corporate models, community services, and networking. All schools need to join with other community agencies to provide services to children.

The State Head Start Collaboration Program

Gwen Chance

Director
Texas State Collaboration Project

Governor Ann Richards appointed a 25-member task force to guide the Texas Head Start Collaboration Project, which is administered by the Office of the Governor's Health and Human Services Policy Council. The task force is a diverse group of people from both rural and urban communities across the state. They are representatives of Head Start, child care, public and private schools, agencies, the legislature, parent groups, and both the private and the public sectors. Another 60 to 70 individuals representing state agencies and organizations serve as resources to the task force.

Vision and Structure of the Task Force

The Texas Head Start Collaboration Task Force has articulated its vision for children:

> *All Texas children of the 21st century will enter a family and society that treasures their addition to the human community. To ensure optimal development of all children, a comprehensive, integrated, community-based system responds to the educational, health, economic, social, and multicultural needs of families.*

The task force is structured in three subgroups to develop and implement a state action plan that will fulfill its vision, goals, and mission: Program Models; Rules, Regulations, and Funding; and Training. These subgroups together will create a new service model that anticipates tomorrow and prepares Texas children and families to meet life's challenges.

Current Activities of the Task Force

The task force is conducting a variety of activities. These are examples:

- Interagency management teams, with specific imperatives for development:
  - — A plan for technical assistance to LEAs in the implementation of S.B. 608 (the prekindergarten, Head Start, child care collaboration bill)
  - — Ways to support local collaborative initiatives, transitions, and continuity of care
  - — Interagency agreement to address collaborative services for children with disabilities and their families
  - — Interagency agreements between Head Start and both JOBS and JTPA
- Representation of Head Start staff on advisory and planning committees at the state level, a policy in effect since the inception of the project
- Ongoing meetings with local programs to support collaborative initiatives funded through the Child Care and Development Block Grant.
- Interagency agreement with the Texas Department of Human Services (TDHS) and the governor's office, which has provided $200,000 from TDHS to the project to implement two statewide conferences and a statewide caregiver status survey, and to purchase technical assistance on a statewide professional preparation system.
- Major roles by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory and the Texas Employment Commission Child Care Clearinghouse in the planning and implementation of statewide efforts, that is, survey and review of model programs.

Sandy Joseph

Director
Pennsylvania State Collaboration Project
Collaborative Approach to Planning, Structure, and Goal

Pennsylvania planned its grant application for the project with a collaborative team of approximately

25 persons: Head Start personnel, parents, staff, and administrators; and staff from the Pennsylvania Departments of Health, of Welfare, and of Education. The grant itself includes a project advisory board that involves a collaborative representation similar to that of the application.

The overall goal of the project is to:

> *Foster working coalitions and promote collaboration and linkages among Head Start agencies, HHS regional office staff, state officials, state agencies, and other childhood staff in order to promote a more coordinated approach to planning, program development, and service delivery to meet the diverse needs of low-income families in Pennsylvania.*

In Pennsylvania, our collaboration project, in partnership with other state agencies, decided to get a good look at what services, programs, and funding are available in Pennsylvania for children ages 0-8. The information led to the governor's executive order creating The Children's Cabinet and The Children's Coalition.

Keys to Change

Just as this approach works for transition team building, it applies to total collaboration, which is what we are working toward. It has led to the recognition and practice of certain keys to change:

- *Understand your own culture first.* You can't chart a course until you know where you are.
- *Encourage those who are bucking the old culture and have ideas for a better one.*
- *Find the best subculture* in your organization and hold it up as an example from which others can learn.
- *Don't attack culture head on.* Help others to find their own new ways to accomplish their tasks, and a better culture will follow.
- *Don't count on a vision to work miracles.* At best it acts as a guiding principle for change.
- *Live the culture you want.* As always, actions speak louder than words.

Anita McClanahan

Oregon State Collaboration Project

Overview and History

In 1985 and 1986, the Oregon Head Start Association and legislative leaders began collaboration in preparation for major state legislation in early childhood education. In 1986 the State Board of Education created the State Early Childhood Initiatives Project with the help of a technical assistance grant from the National Association of State Boards of Education.

From 1987 to 1991 state legislation was enacted for prekindergarten and parent education as well as education reform. As a result, total funding for the Oregon Prekindergarten Program has been approximately $16.4 million, providing services to approximately 2,250 children by 1993.

Goal and Collaborative Scope of Services

One goal of the Oregon State Collaboration Project for Head Start is preschool-to-public-school transition, that is, *having children ready for school and school ready for children.* In recognition of the extensive collaboration required for successful transitions from preschool to school, various factors are designed to link Head Start (prekindergarten, ages 3-4) and public school (kindergarten through grade three, ages 5-8), always with the child and the family at the center of focus.

These factors include parent involvement, mental health services, education services, health and nutrition services, and linguistically and culturally relevant programming.

Five Parts of the Project

The Oregon State Collaboration Project involves five related but separate parts:

- *Wraparound Child Care.* This service involves blending child care and Head Start funds to extend care for children. The project assists

families to become self-sufficient, to gain or maintain their employment, and to participate in training for involvement in schools.

- *Early Childhood Special Education.* Services will be provided through Head Start for children with special needs. Services to meet these needs are approached through collaborative efforts with different resources from Head Start and the Department of Education's Early Childhood Education Program.

- *Oregon Prekindergarten.* This is a state-funded prekindergarten program that directly replicates federal Head Start by adopting the same performance standards and eligibility requirements. A formal intergovernmental agreement between the Head Start Bureau and the Department of Education has been signed. This agreement creates a single collaborative system for administration of both programs.

- *Alcohol and Drug Prevention.* This statewide program trains trainers in "Getting Head Start Against Drugs" for the broad early childhood community. A manual is also being developed that answers questions most often asked during the statewide training sessions.

- *Transition Project.* In areas across the state, 19 teams are operating. Five have been selected for pilot projects. Each site has submitted an action plan involving Head Start, the public schools, social services, and other organizations and agencies appropriate to fulfill the multiple and diverse needs of children and their families.

Roundtable Discussions

The projects listed below were described in separate group settings. Anyone interested in further information about a particular project can contact the project director (see list of participants).

- **Comprehensive Child Development Program: Addressing Family and Transition Issues with School-Based Services.** ***Judith Gerald, Director, Early Childhood Services, Brattleboro, VT; Barbara Nye, Executive Director, Center for Research in Basic Skills, Tennessee State University.***

  These 5-year projects are funded by the Administration on Children, Youth and Families, one at a school district in Vermont, the other administered by Tennessee State University in collaboration with five school systems. They support comprehensive services for children and their families from birth through age 5.

  The scope of these services is broader than transition, a term that may imply a gap; rather, they expand to continuing services without a break in delivery between early intervention, preschool, and the primary grades, since the services are all school-based.

- **Transitions to Kindergarten for Children with Disabilities.** ***Mabel L. Rice and Marion O'Brien, Co-Directors, Kansas Early Childhood Research Institute.***

  The institute is studying the impact of transitions for children from birth through age 8. Transitions include: those for parenting a child with disabilities; those from preschool to kindergarten, including children with disabilities; those from kindergarten into literacy; those from integrated into segregated programs.

  The project has identified areas of risk in the transition from prekindergarten to kindergarten. Teaching style changes from being less directive in preschool to being more directive in kindergarten. Teachers' expectations in kindergarten include mastering basic language skills. Teachers sometimes interpret limited language skills as evidence of social immaturity, academic risk, and limited parental resources. As well, logistical changes of a new building, a new schedule, and less contact with families are risk factors.

  In recognition of these risks, the project has developed extensive support for families and children, especially those with disabilities. It is funded by the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services in the U.S. Department of Education.

- **Bridging Early Services for All Children.** ***Sharon Rosenkoetter, Bridging Early Services Transition Project, Associated Colleges of Central Kansas, McPherson, Kansas.***

  Sponsored by a U.S. Department of Education grant, this project provides assistance to programs and schools in providing effective transition practices for children and their families. It has developed a model applying to different types of transitions, which is based on research and implementation conducted since 1976.

  The project helps professionals and parents learn how to plan and implement successful transitions between hospitals and community-based services, home-based and center-based early childhood services, special preschool and kindergarten-level programs, two or more programs sponsored by different agencies, special services to community programs, segregated services to integrated services, special education and "regular" education, and Head Start and kindergarten.

  The project provides validated procedures and instruments for interagency agreements, communication between the home and the intervention program, family involvement in decisionmaking, construction of a program transition timeline, development of a transition

timeline within the ISFP/IEP for each child and family, identification of local agencies for referral, support for the child in both the sending and the receiving programs, welcome for the child and family into the new program, curricular modification, and evaluation of the transition procedures.

- **What Is Business' Involvement in Early Childhood Education?** ***Diana Rigden, Director of Precollege Programs, Council for Aid to Education.***

  Three areas emerge in business' agenda for early childhood education: philanthropic agenda—programs and services; corporate agenda—employee benefits; and policy agenda—speeches and testimony. The Council for Aid to Education is looking carefully at business involvement in early childhood education. The Council has identified a variety of businesses working in one or more of these three agenda areas and is documenting these efforts.

- **Connections, Collaborating, Continuity: A Continuum of Services for Children and Families.** ***Vicki Smith, Assistant Superintendent for Special Projects and Program Development, Las Cruces Public Schools, New Mexico.***

  Through a home-school-community collaboration that boasts an ever-widening interchange of federal, state, district, and private programs and funds, the Las Cruces Public Schools (LCPS) is building its community's strength. Its administration has worked to bring social and health services into the school, rather than to expend much-needed resources to get children and their families to report to the social service agencies. The LCPS is supporting programs from prenatal care through adult education.

- **Comprehensive Integrated Services at the Early Childhood Education Center.** ***Linda Kolbusz, Coordinator for Program Development, Community Unit School District #300, Carpentersville, Illinois.***

  The Early Childhood Education Center incorporates a comprehensive vision of support for child development, encompassing teaching practice, relationships with parents, and collaboration with other community agencies and institutions.

  The program has various components for different ages and purposes. The Early Intervention Program for children from birth to age 3 involves an Even Start program and home-based parental training. The program for children ages 3 to 5 involves screening for all these children, developmental instruction, and comprehensive support services. The Family Center is a comfortable area in the school for formal and informal activities for parents and families, with parents being active partners in the education of their children.

  The Early Childhood Education Center also involves a kindergarten program, high school child development curriculum practicum, child care transportation, adult education classes in conjunction with the local community college, and transition services through third grade.

Challenges and Opportunities
Making Linkages and the Transition Happen

To conclude the forum, two plenary presentations issued challenges to the participants to take home what they had learned and to take collaborative action for effective transitions.

Linda Likins

Director of Governmental Programs
National Head Start Association

A Breadth of Perspectives to Make a Difference

My role at this forum is to sum up the issues addressed and to offer challenges. And this group has the diversity to make a difference, as you are representatives of Parent Teachers Associations, members of social sérvice agencies, state superintendents, local administrators, parents, Head Start staff and administrators, and others involved in the care and education of young children.

First, to make a difference, consider the difference between managing and leadership. Managing is doing things right. Leadership is doing the right things. You in your diversity can provide both strengths. You can provide the leadership to do the right things and then see that they are done right.

Some Knowledge Acquired From Experience

We face some barriers to overcome. One of these is a culture barrier between public schools and Head Start. They are separate entities and have different viewpoints. In addition, turf issues become a barrier. No matter how cooperative the personalities with these differences seem to be, an important first step is to develop a written memorandum of understanding.

At the same time we need to cultivate the interpersonal relationships between the staffs of the schools and of Head Start. People have to like each other and be willing to work together, and, most of all, be willing to look at the child first and what needs to be done. A courtship is needed for this developed cooperation. Each must be forgiving about a lot of things.

Head Start originated 27 years ago to effect systemic change. However, until about 3 years ago, Head Start was very much a stepchild. No one really wanted to associate with us. Now the stepchild has grown up. What have we learned from our experience?

— We have recognized the importance of mainstreaming children with disabilities into our classrooms.

— We know that a child cannot learn without being mentally and physically healthy.

— A child cannot achieve full potential if living in extreme substandard conditions, if hungry, and unless parents are supportive of the child's success in school.

Parental Involvement

Parents are critically important to the success of their children. One question from the Tennessee General Assembly is worthy of note: If Head Start has been involved for 27 years, why haven't the parents changed the public schools? The reality is they are intimidated from past experience. As a Head Start teacher, I was intimidated by some public school personnel. They were right, I thought. After all, they were the teachers. Nevertheless, schools need to recognize that parents are responsible for their children 24 hours a day. Public schools must value and nurture parent involvement.

Nurturing the Cooperation

Various practices and policies can nurture the cooperation that is needed. School districts need encouragement to work more closely with transitions, to work together, to develop trusting relationships. Each party brings strengths; these

people do not need to compete with each other. Why reinvent the wheel? Head Start has been doing things that school districts want to do. Parents are involved and help make decisions about their children's educations; parents volunteer. The state department of education needs to expect schools to cooperate with other programs, particularly Head Start. When Head Start and the schools cooperate, negotiate, and compromise, the children benefit. In this spirit of cooperation, we can develop a broadened vision to bring in other resources from our communities.

Ronald Areglado

Associate Executive Director for Programs
National Association of Elementary School Principals

Transition is a topic for various conferences now. The good news is that the word is spreading, but the bad news is that we have much farther to go, especially with principals. Principals and schools need to concentrate on decision making in relation to what is good for kids.

Common Sense and Common Interest

Some of our problems in developing smooth transitions lie within ourselves. We tend to use language that others cannot understand. We use acronyms that drive everyone crazy. We need to look beneath the language to what is in our hearts. Transition is about common sense, about knowing what is right in our hearts, about what is important and valuable for kids.

Paradigms and models can be stripped away to reveal the common interest—children. We know, however, that stripping away everything to the common purpose is not easy to do. But amazing things happen when we trust.

We need common sense. We do not need to start over. When we become a new patient of a dentist, we do not ask the dentist to start all over with new x-rays when they have just recently been made. To extend the analogy, we know that Head Start has met children's needs. When a child is having trouble adjusting to the new environment of elementary school and is not assimilating in the new classroom, the teacher may find that Head Start knew the child's needs, and the school program could be adjusted to meet the child's needs. We cannot continue to do business as usual. We must make changes.

New Leadership for a Systemic Problem

Transition is not just a problem in the movement from Head Start to elementary school, but from elementary to middle school, and from middle to high school. Records are never seen from one level to another. This problem is systemic throughout the structure of the schools. Only 10 percent of schools deal with systemic unification of Head Start and schools. Less than 50 percent of schools have a provision for parent visitation to schools.

A new theory of leadership has been heard here. We need moral leadership, the 3–H theory of leadership—head, heart, and hand. Internalize that. When we integrate what we know (head) and what we feel (heart), we take action (hand). Too often we have managers rather than leaders. Intellect in the hand of action is missing the heart. To do the right things, we have to speak with our hearts. Sometimes we need leadership by outrage. Challenge the bureaucracy; be bold in the interest of kids. If you do not, who will? Transitions will come when people with passion in the interests of children take action. Hierarchies and eagles will have to move aside.

Our Focus for Action

Find new ways of doing business. Many principals want to improve in the early childhood domain. They want to improve the quality of educational experiences of children. One concrete action that you as early childhood educators and caregivers can take is to open up your reservoir of experience and share it with the public schools. We need your knowledge.

Above all, take action. Don't wait for permission. Ask forgiveness later rather than wait for permission.

Bridges have become shorter for transition. At one time there were no bridges. It was at least easier

to pass over those that existed. Now our vision is that the barriers that exist at present will vanish, and no further need will exist for bridges. But that vision has not yet become reality. Transition is the word for what is happening not only in this forum but in education, in politics, and in other areas as well.

In our own areas of education and care, let us not lose the momentum. Be active, outrageous, provocative--because young lives are at stake.

Essential Connections

Ten Keys to Culturally Sensitive Child Care

An illustration of the challenges for action issued in the last plenary session was presented as a video that explored the complexity of providing continuity to children in a culturally diverse world and emphasized the importance of cultural identity and family values in the development of a young child.

Peter Mangione

Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development

This video was produced by The Center for Child & Family Studies of the Far West Laboratory (J. Ronald Lally, Executive Producer), in collaboration with the California Department of Education. It is part of The Program for Infant/Toddler Caregivers, which is a comprehensive training system for infant and toddler caregivers. The program consists of a series of 12 videos and 7 curriculum guides.

The structure of the ten keys presented in the video consists of two parts. The first five keys relate to the structure and staffing of child care programs. The second five focus on a process of culturally sensitive care.

1. ***Provide Cultural Consistency.*** Child care programs need to be aware of what goes on at home. The aim is to provide care that resembles the form and style of what is familiar to infants and toddlers, rather than trying to teach culture to them.
2. ***Work Toward Representative Staffing.*** Caregivers of the same culture and language as the children served should be employed. Cultural representation is needed at all levels of staff and management.
3. ***Create Small Groups.*** Small group size is important because caregivers need to have a manageable number of cultures with which to work. With a small group, the opportunity exists to know every family is being served well.
4. ***Use the Home Language.*** When the home language is used and understood, the child's feeling of power and connection is strengthened. Use of that language supports the child's identification with family and culture. In the experience of English-only child care, the child may come to reject the home language. If parents do not speak the language used in the program, all communication should be translated for them, and an interpreter should be available for conferences.
5. ***Make Environments Relevant.*** Provide cultural continuity. Art, food, music, clothes, and photographs by themselves do not communicate what is most important about culture. Above all, interactions convey cultural beliefs and values to young children. Still, the environment should reflect the culture of the children and families served, not the cultures of the world. Then children feel that who they are and where they come from are valued by the people who care for them.
6. ***Explore Your Cultural Beliefs.*** Culture is as invisible to us as water is to a fish. Everything that one does is culturally meaningful. Values and beliefs influence the way we provide care. Doing things naturally is important, but so is an awareness of how one's behavior affects the infant or toddler.
7. ***Be Open to the Perspectives of Others.*** An awareness of multiple perspectives on childrearing leads to respect for the beliefs of others. Sometimes we may become aware of a cultural difference when parents or children act in a way that makes us uncomfortable. Their actions may reflect cultural values that are different from our own. The power of our own culture may lead us to judge an action as right or wrong when that action is simply different from how we would act. Avoid

jumping to conclusions about the proper or best way of doing something.

8. ***Seek Out Cultural and Family Information.*** Learn about families and how they raise their children. Engage in frequent conversations and read about the cultural heritage of the families you serve. Be honest and open in presenting information to parents. Visit communities and homes of families served, provided that families are open to home visits. Collecting information is an ongoing process.

9. ***Clarify Values.*** Things do not always go smoothly even with communication. Get things out in the open. The caregiver must respect the parent's needs and requirements, and parents must be helped to appreciate that certain things are necessary in the care of their children. Partnership with parents means that the parent has knowledge about the child that is essential for the caregiver to do a good job. Parents need to know that the caregiver is open to frank conversation. Unless values are clearly discussed, no basis exists for negotiating areas of genuine disagreements.

10. ***Negotiate Cultural Conflicts.*** Nothing that families do cannot be discussed between caregivers and parents. Negotiation is an essential part of caregiving. Balance what we know with what parents know and what is in the best interest of the child. Be open to changing caregiving practices as a result of negotiation with parents.

NATIONAL FORUM
ON
STRENGTHENING LINKAGES AND THE TRANSITION BETWEEN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND EARLY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

NOVEMBER 5-6, 1992

PARTICIPANT LIST

ALASKA

Kathi Wineman
Early Childhood Specialist
Alaska Department of Education
801 W. 10th Street
Suite 200
Juneau, AK 99801-1894
(907) 465-2841

ALABAMA

Linda W. Story
Principal
Just 4 & 5 Development Laboratory
2263 St. Stephens Road
Mobile, AL 36617
(205) 478-7001

ARKANSAS

Cathy Grace
Executive Director
Southern Early Childhood Association
P.O. Box 5403
Brady Station
Little Rock, AR 72215-5403
(501) 663-0353

ARIZONA

Vivien Dias
Project Learn
Valley of the Sun United Way
1515 E. Osborn Road
P.O. Box 10748
Phoenix, AZ 85014
(602) 263-7701

Sylvia Polacca
Inter-Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc.
4205 N. 7th Avenue
Suite 200
Phoenix, AZ 85013
(602) 248-0071

Amy Schlessman-Frost
TEEM Follow Through
College of Education Annex
University of Arizona
1415 N. Fremont
Tucson, AZ 85719
(602) 621-1360

CALIFORNIA

Paula Alexander
Far West Laboratory
730 Harrison Street
San Francisco, CA 94107
(415) 565-3000

Patricia Gardner
California Department of Education
560 J Street,
Suite 220
Sacramento, CA 95814
(916) 322-6233

Younghee Jang
Southwest Regional Laboratory (SWRL)
4665 Lampson Avenue
Los Alamitos, CA 90720
(310) 598-7661

Peter L. Mangione
Far West Laboratory
180 Harbor Drive
Suite 112
Sausalito, CA 94965
(415) 331-5277

Monica Scott-Green
Associate Development Associates, Inc.
1475 North Broadway
Suite 200
Walnut Creek, CA 94596
(510) 935-9711

Jon Ilita White
Consultant
Compensatory Education Office
California Dept of Education
P.O. Box 94244-2720
721 Capitol Mall
Sacramento, CA 94244-2720
(916) 657-3823

COLORADO

Bertha D. Campbell
NY State Department of Education (formerly)
500 Riverside Drive - Box 907
Basalt, CO 81621-0907
(303) 927-4396

Sandra Harris
Governor's Office on Families
and Children
136 State Capitol
Denver, CO 80203
(303) 866-2155

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Carolyn Breedlove
National Education Association
1201 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 822-7310

Diane Dodge, President
Teaching Strategies, Inc.
4545 42nd Street, N.W.
Suite 306
Washington DC 20016
(202) 362-7543

Lisa Goldblatt
Institute for Educational Leadership
1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW
Suite 310
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 822-8405

Kay Hollestelle
Executive Director
The Children's Foundation
725 15th Street, N.W.
Suite 505
Washington, DC 20005-2109
(202) 347-3300

Lynn C. Holley
National Association of Social Workers
750 1st Street, N.E.
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20008
(202) 336-8273

Regina Kinnard
Migrant Even Start
US Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202
(202) 401-0761

Greg D. Kubiak
Council for American Private Education
1726 M Street, N.W.
Suite 1102
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 659-0016

Leslie A. Lawrence
Research Analyst
National Education Goals Panel
1850 M Street, NW
Suite 270
Washington, D.C. 20036-7590
(202) 632-0952

Kathy Leslie
Employment & Education
U.S. General Accounting Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington DC 20548
(202) 512-7044

Francis J. Method
Senior Education Advisor
Research & Development Bureau
U.S.A.I.D., R & D/Education
609 SA-18
Washington, D.C. 20523
(703) 875-4221

Pamela Rubin
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics
444 N. Capitol Street, N.W., Suite 422
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 624-8827

Bill Shepardson
Council of Chief State School Officers
One Massachusetts Ave., N.W.
Suite 700
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 336-7035

Mary Sosa
National Educational Association
1201 16th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 822-7570

Kate Snider
AACTE
One Dupont Circle, N.W., Suite 610
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 293-2450

Helen Taylor, Executive Director
National Child Day Care Association
1501 Benning Road, N.E.
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 397-3800

Felicia M. Valdez
Chairperson
Developmental Disabilities State Planning Council
D.C. Children's Hospital
111 Michigan Avenue, N.E.
Washington, DC 20010-2970
(202) 745-5600

S. Frances Watts-Henry
Director, Chapter 1 (SEA)
Browne Junior High School
D.C. Public Schools
26th & Benning Road, N.E.
Washington, DC 20002
(202) 724-4178

Josephine Wilson
Program Coordinator
Even Start Program
Educational Consultant/Independent
1301 Madison Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20011
(202) 726-3606

Ted Zeunges
Employment & Education
U.S. General Accounting Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548
(202) 512-7054

DELAWARE

Leslie A. Johnson
Wilmington Head Start
2200 N. Locust Street
Wilmington, DE 19802
(302) 429-0211

Martha Toomey
Delaware Early Childhood Center
Mispillion & West Streets
Harrington, DE 19952
(302) 398-8945

FLORIDA

Mary E. Bryant
Early Childhood Coordinator
Florida Department of Education
325 W. Gaines Street, Suite 754
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400
(904) 922-0034

Virginia Green
College of Education
Florida State University
236 Stone Building, B-195
Tallahassee, FL 32306-3010
(904) 644-0368

Barbara Knowles
Executive Director
Pinellas County License Board
for Children's Centers & Family Day Care
4140 49th Street, North
St. Petersburg, FL 33709
(813) 521-1853

Nancy Livesay
SERVE Laboratory
345 S. Magnolia Drive, Suite D-23
Tallahassee, FL 32301
(800) 352-6001

Jan McCarthy, Director
Center for Child & Family Studies
University of South Florida
4202 E. Fowler Avenue
EDU 112
Tampa, FL 33620
(813) 974-3700

Sarah Sprinkel
Early Childhood Program Specialist
Orange County Public Schools
445 W. Amelia Street
Orlando, FL 32801
(407) 849-3330

Marce Verzaro-O'Brien
Curriculum Director
Early Childhood and Public Policy
Early Childhood Professional Dev.
Network/SCETV
640 99th Street, OCEAN
Marathon, FL 33050
(305) 289-2034

GEORGIA

Rosemary Burton
National Child Care Association
1029 Railroad Street
Conyers, GA 30207
(800) 543-7161

Cindy Chandler
Educational Testing Service
1979 Lakeside Parkway
Suite 400
Tucker, GA 30084
(404) 934-0133

Leslie Graitcer
Bell South Foundation
7 H08, 1155 Peachtree Street
Atlanta, GA 30367-6000
(404) 249-2429

Deborah Childs-Bowen
SouthEastern Regional Vision for Education
41 Marietta Street, N.W.
Suite 1000
Atlanta, GA 30303
(404) 577-7737

Ernestine P. Smith
Regional President
Central Savannah River EOA
Region IV Head Start Association
1029 Greene Street
P.O. Box 10104
Augusta, GA 30903-2704
(404) 722-0493

Kathy Thomas
ETS
1979 Lakeside Pkwy
Suite 400
Tucker, GA 30084
(404) 934-0133

HAWAII

Ginger Fink
Early Education Division
Kamehameha Schools
1887 Makuakane Street
Bishop Estate
Honolulu, HI 96817
(808) 842-8845

Ermile Hargrove
Pacific Region Educational Laboratory
1164 Bishop Street
Suite 1409
Honolulu, HI 96813
(808) 532-1900

Alice Kawakami
Early Childhood Specialist
Pacific Region Educational Laboratory
1164 Bishop Street
Suite 1409
Honolulu, HI 96813
(808) 532-1900

Kellet I. Min
Office of the Superintendent
Hawaii Department of Education
Planning and Evaluation Branch
1390 Miller Street
Room 411
Honolulu, HI 96813
(808) 586-3288

IOWA

Linda Devitt
Spencer Community Schools
Box 7188
Spencer, IA 51301
(712) 262-2710

Jeanine Hough
Coordinator
Parent Involvement
UDMO, Inc.
P.O. Box 519
Graettinger, IA 51342
(712) 859-3885

IDAHO

Darrell K. Loosle, Ed.D.
Associate State Superintendent
State Department of Education
Len B. Jordan Office Building
Boise, ID 83720
(208) 334-2111

Frances Mathison
Executive Director
Head Start Region X Training Conference
Lewis-Clark Early Childhood Program
1805 19th Avenue
Lewiston, ID 83501
(208) 743-6573

ILLINOIS

Judy Caplan
North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
1900 Spring Road Suite 300
Oak Brook, IL 60521
(708) 571-4700

Barbara J. Evans
American Academy of Pediatrics
141 Northwest Point Blvd.
P.O. Box 927
Elk Grove Village, IL 60009-0927
(708) 228-5005

Carole Haymon
James Weldon Johnson School
Chicago Public Schools
420 South Albany Avenue
Chicago, IL 60623
(312) 534-1829

Linda Kolbusz
Director
Project TRANSFER
Community School District #300
300 Cleveland Avenue
Carpentersville, IL 60110-1943
(708) 426-1300

Linda G. Kunesh, Director
Early Childhood & Family Education
North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
1900 Spring Road, Suite 300
Oak Brook, IL 60521
(708) 571-4700

Dr. Roslyn McClendon
North Central Regional
Educational Laboratory
1900 Spring Road, Suite 300
Oak Brook, IL 60521
(708) 571-4700

Minnie Murphy
NHSA Board & Committee
CEDA
R4 North Desplains
Chicago, IL 60661
(312) 207-5444

Romon Gongoley
Wellness Faciliator
Project TRANSFER - School District 300
Lakewood Elementary School
1651 Ravine Lane
Carpentersville, IL 60110
(708) 426-1201

Shekeyah Yehuda
James Weldon Johnson School
Chicago Public Schools
1420 S. Albany Avenue
Chicago, IL 60623
(312) 534-1829

Arlene Zielke
National PTA
3724 W. 102 Street
Chicago, IL 60655
(312) 233-7553

INDIANA

Pamela Terry Godt
Rural Technical Assistance Center
PRC, Inc.
2601 Fortune Circle East
Suite 300A
Indianapolis, IN 46241
(800) 456-2380

Peg Smith, Director
Step Ahead Program
Indiana Bureau of Child Development
N2 W. Washington Street
Room E-414
Indianapolis, IN 46207-7083
(317) 232-1145

KANSAS

Carol Dermyer
Early Childhood Education
Kansas State Board of Education
120 E. 10th Avenue
Topeka, KS 66612-1182
(913) 296-7454

Lina Guebert
Even Start
210 S. Elm Street
Box L
Ogden, KS 66517
(913) 587-2080

Marion O'Brien
Co-Director
Kansas Early Childhood Research Institute
University of Kansas
Dole Center
Lawrence, KS 66045
(913) 864-4570

Alexa Pochowski
Research & Training Association, Inc.
10950 Grandview Ave., Ste 300
Corporate Woods
Overland Park, KS 66210
(800) 922-9031

Gene Ramp
Educational Systems
University of Kansas
Raymond F. Nicholas Hall
Lawrence, KS 66045-2969
(913) 864-4447

Mabel L. Rice, Co-Director
Kansas Early Childhood Research Institute
University of Kansas
Dole Center
Lawrence, KS 66045
(913) 864-4570

Sharon Rosenkoetter
Associate Professor-Special
Associated Colleges of Central Kansas
105 E. Kansas Avenue
McPherson, KS 67460
(316) 241-5153

KENTUCKY

Vickie P. Basham, Director
Division of Program Resources
Kentucky Department of Education
500 Mero Street
Frankfort, KY 40601
(502) 564-4970

Connie Jo Smith
Early Childhood Education Specialist
Western Kentucky University
Training and Technical Assistance Services
344 College of Education
Bowling Green, KY 42101
(502) 745-4041

LOUISIANA

Mary Lou Maples
Louisiana Association, Children Under Six (LACUS)
126 Comanche Drive
Pineville, LA 71360
(318) 443-1562

Linda O. Kennard
Chairman
Governor's Early Childhood Commission
Louisiana State Dept of Education
654 Main St., ESEA Chapter 1
P.O. Box 508
Baton Rouge, LA 70801
(504) 342-3336

Yvonne Lagasse
Louisiana School Nurses Organization
10128 Florence Court
River Ridge, LA 70123
(504) 737-8237

Mary Lou Maples
Louisiana Association on Children Under Six (LACUS)
126 Comanche Drive
Pineville, LA 71360
(318) 443-1562

MASSACHUSETTS

Alan I. Chates
Coordinator
Transition Program
Worcester Public Schools
20 Irving Street
Worcester, MA 01609
(308) 799-3206

Sondra Langer
Lesley College Graduate School
14 Wendell Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
(617) 349-8416

Carol A MacNeill
Early Childhood Specialist
Bureau of Early Childhood
Massachusetts Department of Education
1385 Hancock Street
Quincy, MA 02169-5183
(617) 770-7552

Wyllys Terry, III
Early Childhood Specialist
Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast & Islands
300 Brickstone Square, Suite 900
Andover, MA 01810
(508) 470-0098

MARYLAND

Lee Havis
Executive Director
International Montessori Society
912 Thayer Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 589-1127

Joan K. Herren
Region III, Resource Center
University of Maryland
University Blvd.& Adelphi Rd.
College Park, MD 20742-1630
(301) 985-7840

Paula M. Mintzies
Program Consultant
Edwin Gould Foundation for Children
5004 Cloister Drive
Rockville MD 20852
(301) 897-9654

Cassandra Peters-Johnson
American Speech Language and Hearing Association
10801 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852
(301) 897-5700

Elaine M. Chiariello
Compensatory Education Branch
Maryland State Department of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201
(410) 333-2430

Lee Havis, Executive Director
International Montessori Society
912 Thayer Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 589-1127

Shari Ostrow Scher
Early Childhood Specialist
Chapter I Coordinator
Frederick City Public Schools
115 E. Church Street
Frederick, MD 21702

MAINE

Lisa Levinson
Project Even Start
Waterville High School
Brooklyn Avenue
Waterville, ME 04901
(207) 873-2751

MINNESOTA

Pat Hoven
Director of Community Affairs
Honeywell, Inc.
Honeywell Plaza
P.O. Box 524
Minneapolis, MN 55440-0524
(612) 870-6821

MISSISSIPPI

Rita Lane
Mississippi State Department of Education
Suite 604, P.O. Box 771
Jackson, MS 39205-0771
(601) 359-3499

DeLaura Saunders
Choctaw Head Start
MBCI - Early Childhood Education
P.O. Box 6010
Philadelphia, MS 39350
(601) 656-5251

MONTANA

June Atkins
Early Childhood Specialist
Montana Office of Public Instruction
Capitol Station
Helena, MT 59620

NORTH CAROLINA

Barbara Carr
New Hanover County School System
P.O. Box 3308
Topsail Beach, NC 28445
(919) 251-6180

Mike Mathers
Chapel Hill Training--Outreach Project
800 Eastowne Drive
Suite 105
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
(919) 490-5577

Richard L. Thompson, Director
North Carolina Center for the
Advancement of Teaching
Cullowhee, NC 28723-9062
(704) 293-5202

NEBRASKA

Harriet A. Egertson
Administrator
Office of Child Development
Nebraska Department of Education
301 Centennial Mall South
Lincoln, NE 68509
(402) 471-3184

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Peter Higbee
Tri-County Head Start
610 Sullivan Street
Berlin, NH 03570
(603) 752-7138

NEW JERSEY

Lorraine C. Johnson
Regional President
Head Start Program
North Hudson Community Action
7611 Broadway
North Bergen, NJ 07407
(201) 869-3931

NEW MEXICO

Elizabeth Bennett
Las Cruces School District #2
505 S. Main
Suite 249
Las Cruces, NM 88001
(505) 527-5876

Kathryn Holmes
Project Follow Through
MacArthur Elementary School
Las Cruces School District #2
655 N. Fourth Street
Las Cruces, NM 88001
(505) 527-9556

Vicki Smith
Director
Federal Programs
Las Cruces School District #2
301 W. Amador
Las Cruces, NM 88005
(505) 527-5863

NEVADA

Bonnie Andrews
Community Services Agency
P.O. Box 10167
Reno, NV 89510
(702) 786-5743

Carla Eben-Sarabia
601 Stewart Street
Reno, NV 89502
(702) 323-6743

Mark Lange
Clark County School District
2832 East Flamingo Road
Las Vegas, NV 89121
(702) 799-5239

NEW YORK

Marilyn J. Flood, Esq.
Project Director
Child Care Action Campaign
330 7th Avenue
17th Floor
New York NY 10001
(212) 239-0138

Sharon Lee Holder
Division of Child Development Services
New York State Department of Education
364 EBA
Albany NY 12234
(518) 474-4947

Faith Lamb Parker
National Council of Jewish Women Center
for the Child
53 West 23rd Street
New York, NY 10010
(212) 645-4048

Daniel C. Lazorchick
National Elementary School Center
Two East 103rd Street
New York, NY 10029
(212) 289-5929

Iris Sroka
Children's Television Workshop
One Lincoln Plaza
New York, NY 10023
(212) 875-6704

Diana Rigden
Director of Precollege Programs
Council for Aid to Education
51 Madison Avenue
Suite 2200
New York, NY 10010
(212) 689-2400

Carolyn Umphries
Children's Television Workshop
One Lincoln Plaza
New York, NY 10023
(212) 875-6100

Kathryn Sue Updike
Associate, Early Childhood Education
Office of Parent Partnerships
New York State Department of Education
Room 364 EBA
Albany, NY 12234
(518) 473-8372

OHIO

Tracey C. Ballas
National School Age Child Care Alliance
142 Norwood Boulevard
Zanesville, OH 43701
(614) 453-7743

Ann S. Bardwell, Ph.D.
Project Director
Child Development Council
Franklin County, Inc.
398 S. Grant Avenue
Suite 212
Columbus, OH 43215
(614) 221-1709

Pauline Radebaugh
Board Member
North Central Regional Educational Laboratory
920 Kenwood Lane
Columbus, OH 43220
(614) 451-1169

Bernice Smith, Ph.D.
Supervisor
Early Childhood Education
Columbus Public Schools
270 E. State Street
Columbus, OH 43215
(614) 365-5822

Jane M. Wiechel
Director
Divison of Early Childhood Education
Ohio Department of Education
65 South Front Street, room 202
Columbus, OH 43266-0308
(614) 466-0224

OREGON

Cliff Eberhardt
Specialist
Chapter 1
Oregon Department of Education
700 Pringle Pkwy, S.E.
Salem, OR 97310-0290
(503) 378-3606

Rex Hagans
Acting Director
Child, Family & Community Program
Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory
101 S.W. Main
Suite 500
Portland, OR 97204
(503) 275-9543

OKLAHOMA

Judy Towry
United CAP Head Start
P.O. Box 384
Pawnee, OK 74058
(918) 762-2561

PENNSYLVANIA

Janet R. Cornwell
Research for Better Schools
444 N. 3rd Street
Philadelphia, PA 19123
(215) 574-9300

Anne M. Doerr, Director
Lycoming-Clinton Head Start
Pennsylvania Head Start Administrators Association
P.O. Box 1328
Williamsport, PA 17703-1328
(717) 326-0587

Barbara Gill
Even Start
Reading Area Community College
P.O. Box 1706
Reading, PA 19603
(215) 372-4721

Gail G Jackson
President-Elect
PAFPC/PDE Early Childhood Conference
Coatesville Area School District
1515 E. Lincoln Highway
Coatesville, PA 19320
(215) 383-7900

Grace Asberry Jones
Reading School District
Amanda E. Stout Elementary School
321 South Tenth Street
Reading, PA 19602
(215) 371-5816

Sandra Joseph
Coordinator
Pennsylvania State Collaboration Project
Office of the Governor
506 Finance Building
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333
(717) 787-8595

Connie Shafer
Executive Director
Blair County Head Start
319 Sycamore Street
Altoona, PA 16602
(814) 946-5247

Susanna Varga
Coalesville Area School District
1515 East Lincoln Highway
Coalesville, PA 19320
(215) 383-3770

RHODE ISLAND

Barbara C. Burgess
Rhode Island Department of Education
22 Hayes Street
Providence, RI 02908
(401) 277-3505

Charlotte Diffendale
Specialist
Early Childhood, Literacy Programs
Rhode Island Department of Education
22 Hayes Street
Providence, RI 02908
(401) 277-6890

SOUTH CAROLINA

Rubye H. Jones
SHARE Greenville-Pickens SunBelt Human Resources
652 Rutherford Road
Greenville, SC 29609
(803) 233-4019

TENNESSEE

Kathy Greenberg
COGMET Project
The University of Tennessee
243 Claxton Addition
Knoxville, TN 37996-3400
(615) 974-0797

Barbara Nye
Executive Director
Center for Research in Basic Skills
Tennessee State University
330 10th Avenue North
Nashville, TN 37203
(615) 251-1540

TEXAS

Clara Byars
Parent/Child Incorporated
1000 W. Harriman
San Antonio, TX 78207-7900
(512) 226-6232

Gwen Chance
Director, Texas Collaboration Project
Office of the Governor
State of Texas
P.O. Box 12428
Capitol Station
Austin, TX 78711
(512) 463-2198

Michele A. Goady
Project Director
Head Start Transition Project
Dallas Independent School District
3700 Ross Avenue
P.O. Box 53
Dallas, TX 75204
(214) 824-1620

Emigdio Gonzalez, III
Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
3550 Mark Jason
El Paso, TX 79936
(915) 857-1185

Rose Lopez
Fabens IS
P.O. Box 697
Fabens, TX 79838
(915) 764-3339

Helen Lopez
Parent/Child Incorporated
1000 W. Harriman
San Antonio, TX 78207-7900
(512) 226-6232

Lelia Onsurez
Clint Independent School District
14609 Shogun
El Paso, TX 79936
(915) 857-0658

Patricia Phipps
Assistant Professor
College of Education
University of Houston
4800 Calhoun
Houston, TX 77204
(713) 440-4181

Elizabeth Rodriguez
Head Start Parent
Region XIX Education Service Center
El Paso Head Start Program
6611 Boeing Drive
El Paso, TX 79925
(915) 779-3737

Cindy Rojas-Rodriguez
Senior Training, Technical Assistance Associate
Southwest Educational Development Laboratory
211 E. 7th Street
Austin, TX 78701-3281
(512) 476-6861

Irene Rosales
Education Coordinator
Region XIX Education Service Center
Head Start Program
6611 Boeing Drive
El Paso, TX 79925
(915) 779-3737

Joe Segura
Parent/Child Incorporated
1000 W. Harriman
San Antonio, TX 78207-7900
(512) 226-6232

UTAH

Bonnie Norris
Community Family Partnership Project
Utah State University
CPD-6800
Logan, UT 84322
(801) 750-2008

VIRGINIA

Brian Curry
Association for Supervision
and Curriculum Development
1250 N. Pitt Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 549-9110

Paulette Jackson
Arlington County Department of Human Services
2100 Clarendon Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201
(703) 358-3341

Jacqueline Gardner
Head Start--Williamsburg
P.O. Box HK
Williamsburg, VA 23185
(804) 229-6417

Anne Goldstein, Director
Laurel Learning Center
Reston Interfaith, Inc
2355-D Hunters Woods Plaza
Reston, VA 22091
(703) 476-6585

Margaret Gurkin
Augusta County Public Schools
Route 1, Box 252
Fishersville VA 22939
(703) 885-8153

Ann Hansborough
Prince William County Public Schools
P.O. Box 389
Manassas, VA 22111
(703) 791-7245

Lisa Huntington
Region III RAP
Head Start Resource Access Project
P.O. Box 299
Lightfoot, VA 23090
(800) 237-7273

George H. Irby
Chapter 1
Virginia Department of Education
P.O. Box 2121
Richmond, VA 23216
(804) 225-2707

Carolyn Jackson
Coordinator
School Age Programs
Laurel Learning Center/Reston Interfaith, Inc.
2355-D Hunters Woods Plaza
Reston, VA 22091
(703) 476-6585

Linda Likins
Director, Governmental Programs
National Head Start Association
201 North Union Street
Suite 320
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 739-0875

Marilyn Merritt
Consultant
2706 North Key Boulevard
Arlington, VA 22201-4004
(703) 276-9628

Luzanne Pierce
Technical Assistance Specialist
National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Inc.
1800 Diagonal Road
Suite 320
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 519-3800

Thomas Schultz, Director
Center on Educational Services
for Young Learners
National Assoc.of State Boards of Ed.
1012 Cameron Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 684-4000

Candace Sullivan
National Association of
State Boards of Education
1012 Cameron Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
(703) 684-4000

Mollie H. Thurston
Roanoke City Public Schools
P.O. Box 13145
Roanoke, VA 24031

Missy Webb
National Child Care Association
8611 Virginia Avenue
Annandale, VA 22003
(703) 352-3188

Bob Witherspoon
Education Consultant--Chapter 1 Parents
402 Queens Row
Herndon, VA 22070
(703) 437-3454

VERMONT

Judith Gerald
Director
Early Childhood Services
Brattleboro Town School District
218 Canal Street
Brattleboro, VT 05301
(802) 254-3742

Lois A. Holbrook
Early Childhood Associate
Northeast Regional Resource Center
Trinity College of Vermont
Institute for Program Dev.
Burlington, VT 05482
(802) 658-5036

WASHINGTON

Mary E. Carr, Supervisor
Early Childhood Education
Office of Public Instruction
Old Capitol Building FG11
P.O. Box 42700
Olympia, WA 98504-7200
(206) 586-2263

Mary Frost
Community Development
Early Childhood Education
and Assistance Program
906 Columbia Street, SW
Mail Stop GH-51
Olympia, WA 98504
(206) 753-4106

Gary Johnson, Director
School Effectiveness Model
Follow Through Sponsor
Washington Research Institute
180 Nickerson Street
Suite 103
Seattle, WA 98109
(206) 285-9317

WISCONSIN

Jeanne M. Bitkers
Program Coordinator
The Early Learning Centers
Sheboygan Area School District
721 N. 6th Street
Sheboygan, WI 53081
(414) 458-9693

Elizabeth Graue
Assistant Professor
Early Childhood Education
University of Wisconsin - Madison
225 N. Mills
Madison, WI 53706
(608) 263-4674

Suzanne M. Hoppe
Head Start of Central Wisconsin
104 West Franklin Street
Portage, WI 53901
(608) 742-5329

Linda Young
Executive Director
Renewal Unlimited, Inc.
Head Start of Central Wisconsin
135 Linn, Box 77
Baraboo, WI 53913
(608) 356-8764

WEST VIRGINIA

Patricia J. Gracey
Executive Director
Northern Panhandle Head Start, Inc.
51 11th Street
Wheeling, WV 26003
(304) 233-3290

Lynn Jones
Summit Center for Human Development
6 Hospital Plaza
Clarksburg, WV 26301
(304) 623-5666

Barbara Merrill
Governor's Cabinet on Children & Families
2 Players Club Drive
Charleston, WV 25311
(304) 558-0600

Carol Perroncel
Staff Associate
Evaluation and Planning Unit
Appalachia Educational Laboratory
P.O. Box 1348
Charleston, WV 25325
(800) 624-9120

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Ches Applewhite
OERI
U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20208-5644
(202) 219-1523

Eve Bither
Director, Programs for the Improvement of Practice, OERI
U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20208-5644
(202) 219-2164

Jim Button
Special Education & Rehabiliation Services
US Department of Education
330 C Street, S.W.
Room 3121
Washington, DC 20202
(202) 205-8239

Carter Collins
OERI
U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20208-5644
(202) 219-2194

John Coulson
OERI
U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20208-5644
(202) 219-2133

Peggy Cvach
U.S. Department of Education
330 C Street, S.W.
Room 4609
Washington DC 20202
(202) 205-9807

John Egermeier
OERI
U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20208-5644

(202) 219-2119

Tom Fagan
Chapter 1
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Room 2043
Washington, DC 20202
(202) 401-1682

Barbara Heflin
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20202

Yvonne Hicks
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Room 2004
Washington, DC 20202
(202) 401-1682

Harold Himmelfarb
OERI Liaison, Center for Research on Effective Schooling for Disadvandaged
U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Room 624
Washington, DC 20208-5646
(202) 219-2031

David Jackson
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20202

Susan Klein
OERI
U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Room 627J
Washington, DC 20208
(202) 219-2038

Susan Klein
OERI
U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Room 627J
Washington, DC 20208
(202) 219-2038

Jean Klinge
Chapter 1
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Room 2043
Washington, DC 20202
(202) 401-1682

Clara Lawson-Holmes
OERI
U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20208
(202) 219-2028

Mary Jean LeTendre
Chapter 1
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Room 2043
Washington, DC 20202
(202) 401-1682

Thelma Leenhouts
Director of Outreach
OERI
U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Room 302D
Washington, DC 20208-5570
(202) 219-1569

John T. MacDonald
Assistant Secretary for Elementary
and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W., Room 2189
Washington, DC 20202
(202) 401-0113

Carol Mitchell
OERI
U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20208-5644
(202) 219-2128

Nancy Paulu
Project Officer
Research Applications Division, OERI
U.S. Department of Education
C5 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Rm 508J
Washington, DC 20215
(202) 219-2110

Ramon Ruiz
OESE/OME
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Rm 2149
Washington, DC 20202
(202) 401-1112

Marshall Sashkin
OERI
U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20208-5644
(202) 219-2120

Doris F. Sligh
Chapter I / OERI
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Ave, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202
(202) 401-0712

Charles Stalford
OERI
U.S. Deparment of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20208
(202) 219-2126

Sheryl Stein
OERI
U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Room 602
Washington, DC 20208
(202) 208-0587

Joyce Stern
U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20208-5644
(202) 219-2195

Maris Vinovskis
Research Advisor, OERI
U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W. room 602G
Washington, D.C. 20208-5530
(202) 219-2006

Barbara J. Wells
OBEMA
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20202-6642
(202) 205-8840

Joseph Wilkes
OERI
U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20208-5644
(202) 219-2186

Janice H. Wilcot
Office of Postsecondary Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Room 3006, ROB - 3
Washington, DC 20202
(202) 708-4654

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Martin Gerry
Assistant Secretary for Planning
and Evaluation
U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Suite 415-F
Washington, DC 20201
(202) 690-7858

Allen Smith
Special Assistant to Associate
Commissioner for Head Start Bureau
U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services
330 C Street, S.W., Room 2310 D
Washington, D.C. 20201
(202) 205-8566

Doug Klafehn
Acting Associate Commissioner for
Head Start Bureau
U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services
330 C Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201
(202) 205-8567

ED/OERI 93-12

ISBN 0-16-042937-4

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